



# & Workers' Liberty **Solidarity**

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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# MAKE MAY RESIGN!

According to the media over the 8-9 July weekend, the argument among Tory MPs is whether to replace Theresa May now by David Davis, or to wait to replace her until the autumn.

Even Tory party chair Grant Shapps has no confidence in May: "Theresa May will need to operate a completely different model to remain in power".

Getting May out will be a first step in bringing down the Tory government.

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## Strikes, protests, no co-operation in Parliament

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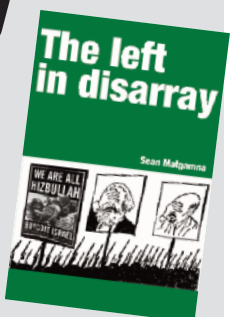
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**The left in  
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# Iraq takes back Mosul Socialists and digital liberties

By Simon Nelson

**After 10 months of fighting the Iraqi government has officially declared victory against Daesh in Mosul.**

The defeat of Daesh should be welcomed, but there are serious questions about the military advance in Mosul, how civilians will now be treated, and how the city will be rebuilt.

Amnesty International has called for an immediate investigation into the loss of civilian life to Daesh, the army and militias. The group have produced a report detailing 45 attacks that killed 426 civilians. Despite Daesh using human shields, neither the Iraqi army nor the coalition bombing campaign considered how to adapt their tactics.

The Iraqi army has already begun a process of vetting Mosul's remaining residents, seeking out links with Daesh. Disappearances have been reported. Thousands of refugees remain in camps across northern Iraq, and thousands more are internally displaced.

The UNHCR said; "Many have



**Mosul destroyed**

nothing to go back to, due to extensive damage caused during the conflict, while key basic services, such as water, electricity and other key infrastructure, including schools and hospitals, will need to be rebuilt or repaired."

While Daesh has been driven out of Mosul and are under serious assault in Raqqa, it is not yet defeated. The Shia-sectarian government of Iraq fuelled Sunni dissatisfaction following the 2003 Iraq War.

**Daesh can gain ground if the same issues affect the reconstruction of Mosul.**



## Stop these Stalinist threats

By Sacha Ismail

**This picture was taken at Durham Miners' Gala on 8 July.**

In the picture, (originally posted on Facebook) the person on the left is George Waterhouse, RMT activist and prominent member of the Communist Party of Britain. The person on the right is Alex Halligan, a Salford Labour Party activist who works for Salford MP Rebecca Long-Bailey.

The badge that Halligan is proudly displaying says "Good night Trotskyite", and shows someone, presumably a Trotskyist, being icepicked — a reference to the murder of Trotsky by Stalin's assassin Ramón Mercader. "Good night Trotskyite" is a "play" on "Good night white pride", a slogan used by left-wing activists in the US clashing with the far-right Ku Klux Klan.

Although this is chilling, it will not be entirely surprising to anyone familiar with the way a small but vocal Stalinist scene has developed in the Labour left — and is tolerated and even encouraged by non-Stalinists prominent in Momentum, because it is convenient to have

people around who will energetically attack left-wingers.

Sadly we hear of young people who work or volunteer at, or hang around with people from, the Momentum office using 1930s Stalinist jargon attacking Trotskyists — "Vigilance", "Clear them out" and even "Hitler's men"!

In the middle of the general election campaign, after months of inactivity, a slim majority of the defunct Momentum Youth and Student committee voted in a snap email ballot to expel committee members purged from Labour by the party's Compliance Unit and to ban members of "democratic centralist", i.e. Trotskyist, groups from future MYS events.

The Stalinist stuff fits well with a desire to deal with critics and opponents on the left not by political argument and democratic organising but by various degrees of administrative suppression, intimidation — and, it seems, at least threats of violence.

**Anyone concerned about the health of the labour movement and its left wing should be concerned by this unpleasant development.**

By Adrian Noble

**Digital liberties and free use of the internet are facing new threats in Britain, while there are increasing efforts by campaigners to establish a framework of rights that can safeguard online civil liberties.**

In response to the London Bridge terror attack, Theresa May called for new measures to regulate and monitor the internet, claiming that social networking was a potential breeding ground for the ideology of "Islamic extremism".

Shortly after, in the general election the Tory manifesto contained a section on "Prosperity and Security in a Digital Age". It made vague promises to restrict online content in order, they claimed, to protect children, limit hate speech and crack down on the spread of terrorist propaganda.

While it's hard to distinguish their specific plans, these noises point in the direction of further restricting the freedom of the internet, and increasing the monitoring and surveillance power of the state.

And these developments come on the back of the recently implemented Investigatory Powers Act 2016, also known as the "Snoopers Charter" — which radically extends the government and security services' powers of surveillance by forcing internet providers to maintain users' browsing data for 12 months, and permits security services to lawfully hack into civilians' electronic devices under a warrant. Additionally, in 2016 the Tories pledged 1.9 billion for cyber-security.

In his leadership campaign Corbyn campaigned for his "Digital Democracy Manifesto", a radical set of policies that included an "open knowledge library" that would be a free-to-access knowledge bank of accumulated knowledge and resources from across the education system, as well as reforms to intellectual property law



to protect and enhance user-created content.

Corbyn had proposed "co-operatively owned digital platforms", and the creation of a "Digital Charter of Civil Liberties" to protect individual liberties and the right to privacy, as well as protection from "snooping by security services". Unfortunately, some of these stronger policies to enhance users' rights failed to make it into Labour's 2017 manifesto, which contained minimal references to protecting online privacy, and focused on growing the "digital economy".

The notion of a Digital Charter of Civil Liberties is not original to Corbyn's campaign. In 2014 the Brazilian Parliament ratified the Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet that entrenches a number of constitutional protections for citizens.

In 2015, a committee of the Italian Parliament put forward a draft of the Internet Bill of Rights. The Italian framework is not embedded in law but rather a declaration of intent.

### CHARTERS

**Both of these attempts to create charters are modelled on a framework of human rights, and attempt to make some significant advances towards addressing the dangers of private and state control over the arena of the Internet.**

In late 2016 a campaign called "Digital Liberties" was launched, seeking to establish a British Digital Bill of Rights. Presenting itself as "A group of entrepreneurs, professionals and academics with cross Parliamentary endorsement", the

campaign is pushing for legislation to secure civil rights amongst the complexities of the digital world.

How should socialists relate to these questions? A Digital Bill of Rights seems like a step forward, but it may turn out to be a double-edged sword. For example, among the civil protections the Brazilian version enacted into law, there was also snooping legislation requiring private companies to retain users' data. The final product is very much subject to the balance of parliamentary powers.

Also, the rate of technological development is almost certain to outpace the ability of the state to effectively monitor or enforce any legislation set down, in much the same way that the financial industry is able to innovate outside of regulatory frameworks set down by government.

We need to go beyond the limits of liberal parliamentary reforms and raise the question of class ownership in relation to the sphere of information technology and communications.

The internet and digital technology that comes with it provides a community space that offers the potential to radically socialise access to information, and as such it is a political question on which anti-capitalist objectives can be pushed forward.

The libertarian-right tends to dominate the debate on internet freedom, pushing the singular narrative that only state control, and not private ownership over technology, is the central threat to our digital liberties.

As the role of information becomes increasingly embedded in daily life, as the potential of technology grows and the economic power of the information industry enhances, we must begin to work out a clearer and more radical programme of digital liberties.

**We must be for the socialization of information technology and the virtual spaces that it provides.**



**Over 100,000 people joined left-wing protests outside the G20 summit in Hamburg on 7-8 July, and small "black bloc" groups clashed violently with police. Inside the summit, the big story was the possible beginning of the end of the 70-year-old keystone role for the USA in global capitalism. The final communiqué explicitly set the USA aside from the unanimous agreement of the other 19 states.**



# Grenfell's forgotten victims

By Gemma Short

**Survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire who were in the UK illegally have been told they will only get 12 months limited leave to remain by the Home Office.**

In a year's time people could be forcibly deported. This, despite an appeal from the police just two weeks ago for people to come forward with information about those who were living in the tower, and for survivors to come forward to receive support, where the police claimed that immigration status would not be a problem.

It is now very likely that people with concerns over their immigration status will not come forward. Labour Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott called the move "grotesque", and said, "Some victims have literally lost everything in this horrific tragedy: all their possessions, homes and loved ones... To access all the support they need without fear of deportation, any survivors concerned about their status must be given indefinite leave to remain. Otherwise, they may just disappear off the grid."

After initially staying in position, and hiding from the public, council leader Nick Pagent-Brown, deputy leader Rock Feilding-Mellen, and head of Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation Robert Black, have now resigned.

The government has confirmed "outside experts" will be brought in to manage the council's housing,



regeneration, community engagement and governance services. But unaccountable government commissioners are not the answer to a crisis which was born out of unaccountable local government.

Discontent with the proposed public inquiry, particularly with the appointment of Sir Martin Moore-Bick, is growing. Labour's Shadow Housing Minister John Healey has proposed that an advisory panel that includes survivors and relatives be set up.

After the inquiry was set up, Amand Fernandez, a resident of Lancaster West estate, which is close to Grenfell Tower, said: "Prime Minister Theresa May did not even respond to our email requesting direct involvement on the establishment of the public inquiry. She has already appointed a judge who has told us the inquiry will be very narrow. She promised to consult us on this, but has completely gone back on that promise. We are deeply disappointed".

It has emerged that even before the fire Kensington and Chelsea

Council had one of the worst records on housing people in need. The council has placed 1,668 homeless households in temporary housing outside the area, and 902 had been in out-of-borough temporary housing for more at least a year. Understandably, questions are being raised over whether survivors of the fire will be housed locally. The government had promised that all survivors would be offered temporary housing by Wednesday 5 July, but only 14 offers have been accepted by families, 19 haven't received an offer at all, and many of the rest are holding out for offers of permanent homes.

Reports have surfaced of residents of the Lancaster West estate still being charged rent, despite still being unable to return to their homes because they have been left uninhabitable, with no gas or water, since the fire.

**The Grenfell Action Group have called the residents of the Lancaster West estate "the forgotten victims".**



**On 8 July a "migrants' rights and anti-racist bloc" organised by Lesbian and Gays Support the Migrants and Movement for Justice among others occupied and marched at the head of the official Pride Parade in London. The bloc called for action for LGBT migrants and refugees and for open borders. Many carried placards with the slogan "Pride is a protest, not for profit". With the Pride parade becoming increasingly tightly controlled, and with people not able to participate without one of the limited number of official wristbands, the fact that the bloc managed to march at the head of the parade was very heartening.**



## Stop this social cleansing!

By Hugh Daniels

**Last Monday, 3 July, an estimated 1,500 people marched on Haringey Civic Centre to protest against the largest sell-off of local council property in UK history.**

The cabinet of Haringey council voted to establish the "Haringey Development Vehicle" (HDV). The "HDV" will be run by a board of just six people. Three from the council — which could be unelected council officers not councillors — and three representing Lendlease, a multinational construction company and union blacklisted, who will provide the capital.

Over the coming years, a series of further votes will be tabled to transfer land and property out of public ownership and into the HDV, away from democratic control.

The HDV is set to include £2 billion of public assets, including social housing (much will be demolished), a school (which will be turned into an academy) and an Asian community centre (which will be destroyed with no plan for rehousing). There is no offer of increased social housing.

Haringey MPs David Lammy and Catherine West (both Labour) had written to the council urging them to halt the process. Inside the chamber, Labour councillor Alan Strickland, who heads this project for the council, has admitted that

there may be "poor doors" — separate entrances for private and council tenants. Removed tenants will get limited options on other housing before they must take what they are given or be made homeless.

The leader of the council, Claire Kober, has claimed that all tenants have a right of return, but this is not in the council documents which have been voted on.

While the cabinet were inside, protestors were banging on windows, shouting "no social cleansing" and clanging pots and pans. Traffic was halted down one side of Wood Green High Street and police got extremely jittery as protestors flooded into unexpected areas behind the council building.

At a fundraiser afterwards, one of the organisers argued that the HDV was born from the 2011 Tottenham riots. The council came under pressure to improve the area and saw that the easiest and most effective option would be to change the people.

Despite the vote, the campaign continues. A legal challenge has been launched and there must be further votes before any land is transferred.

The HDV needs to be a beacon for resistance across London and beyond. It is the largest of its kind, but otherwise far from unique.

**Across the country we must remove Blairite councillors and create a movement that will fight for workers' cities.**

## Primary scraps all TAs

**A primary school in Sheffield is to become the first to get rid of all its teaching assistants.**

As part of a cost-cutting restructure, unions claim the school is planning on sacking its nine teaching assistants. The school also plans to introduce a post of "fellow" — unqualified teacher.

Both Unison and the National Union of Teachers say they do not know of any other schools that have got rid of all of their teaching assistants. Both oppose the plans and are consulting with staff.

In addition to cuts already made, schools are floundering while the plan for the new schools funding formula is unclear. The proposed new funding formula was widely opposed and made the Tories unpopular during the election period, leading to Education Secretary Justine Greening being given the go-ahead to re-think.

**Schools are making drastic funding decisions blindly, with varying results school by school.**





## Stalinism in the Turkish workers' movement



**May I, as a non-expert on Turkish matters, add a few outsider's comments to the excellent article by Marksist Tutum, 'From Dictatorship to Liberal capitalism' in *Solidarity* (no. 443, 20 June, 2017).**

First, although I totally accept the critique of the Kemalist regime outlined in the article, it is probably worth stressing two aspects of Kemalist policy which were surely progressive: the secularism adopted by Turkey as state policy was, as far as I am aware, unique in the region; likewise the policies adopted towards women despite, I am sure, numerous caveats and criticisms, were a major step forward, particularly when considering what had existed in the past. In 1937 the Turkish Parliament had 18 women delegates when some European countries still did not allow women the vote. Whatever criticisms may be made of the Kemal regime, these were significant achievements.

In 2007 and 2008 I made two trips to Turkey, speaking at three meetings in Istanbul, Eskişehir and Diyarbakır. The meeting in Istanbul took place the day after the May Day rally in Taksim Square. At both the massive May Day rally (which I attended) and at the meeting I was struck by the strong presence of Stalinism. In the west nowadays, it is rare to see banners with pictures of Stalin adorning them, but they were immediately apparent at the May Day rally. At the meeting the next day I was asked the question "What did I think of the Soviet Union?" My answer, "Not very much", led to an immediate walkout by the questioner. Admittedly, a more nuanced reply was probably called for, but I suspect the response of my critic(s) would have been the same.

These are rather random observations — what I really wanted to mention is this: the writers of the article mention the "Workers Opposition" and the poet Nazim Hikmet. I would humbly suggest that any comrade who wishes to acquire a "feel" for Turkey and its history in the 20th Century should purchase a copy of Hikmet's epic poem, 'Human Landscapes from my Country' (warning: it is epic in every sense, amounting to 463 pages in the English language version! I bought my copy from Foyles in Charing Cross Road, London. It is published by Persea Books, New York, 2002). Personally, I think this poem, despite its formidable length, is one of the most moving, interesting and inspirational pieces of writing I have ever come across. I can only urge comrades to read it.

**To conclude, I hope the second instalment of this article will mention the other artist from Turkey whose work I have found so important and inspirational — the film director Yılmaz Güney.**

*John Cunningham, Lancashire*

## A discussion on Rojava politics

**Riki Lane reports on the Rojava Revolution conference, Melbourne (30 June-1 July)**

**Like many leftists (and liberals) around the world, I drew great inspiration from the struggle against Daesh in Kobane, Northern Syria, by Kurdish forces of the YPG/YPJ associated with the PYD.**

Iconic images of women fighters defeating Islamist fundamentalists carried a strong message of the power of collective organisation by working people. Many leftists, including Australia's Socialist Alliance (SA), laud them as a beacon of hope. However, I am still critical of the claims that the PYD/PKK etc. represent a genuine working class alternative.

Led by SA members, Australian for Kurdistan held a conference in Melbourne which attracted over 1500 people. I was invited to chair the Friday night public meeting, which heard brief talks from PYD leader Saleh Muslim via Skype, Michelle Harding, whose Australian son died fighting with the YPG against Daesh, lawyers Rob Stary and Jessie Smith on cases where people have been charged (and dismissed) with terrorism, and a speaker for the Kurdish Democratic Coordinating Committee.

The following day, Saleh Muslim gave a longer presentation. He outlined the development from 2012 of their system of self-government, with governing councils including multiple parties. He stressed the large role of women fighters and of the alliance between Kurds, Arabs and Syrian peoples. Interestingly there was no talk of socialism, but of "defending universal values, building an or-

ganised society ... a free people can do everything". Language clearly on the terrain of a bourgeois democratic revolution. It was assumed throughout that the PYD maintains its position as the dominant force, especially militarily.

However, there was a strong stress on democracy from the bottom up, in line with democratic confederalism, that PKK leader Ocalan took from Bookchin. They adapt models of cooperatives from Basque and other experiences. As the range of regions their system covers has expanded beyond Kurdish areas, the range of parties and politics accepting it has also expanded.

### DEMOCRACY

**Overall this is essentially standard bourgeois democracy, but with a strong emphasis on bottom-up democratic development of a social economy.**

The "social contract" document — updated and adopted by over 20 parties as a virtual constitution in 2016 for the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS) — reflect both tendencies.

Answering questions, Saleh Muslim said that future investment from corporations will have to share with local cooperatives — they are building a social economy, not state controlled socialism. While the PYD do not argue for independence, if the Kurds in Iraq form an independent state after a referendum (later this year), Rojava may have a better relationship with them — as the Iraqi Kurds will have a stronger position in relation to Turkey. On the tactical alliance with the US, and what would happen if the US betrayed them, he said "Nobody created us, nobody

can destroy us. After Kobane, they (the US) approached us to fight terrorists. We don't depend on them or on Russia, but on our people."

There was considerable discussion on the relationship with the US. Everyone seemed to recognise that the US could betray them at any time. There was also discussion around relations between the Kurdish dominated PYD and other ethnic groups in newly liberated areas. I raised the example of the battle for Raqqa, where the PYD led Syrian Democratic forces (SDF) could easily be seen as invaders, especially given the high civilian casualties caused by indiscriminate US bombing. An encouraging sign is that the 2016 social contract excludes any "counter-dispossession" of formerly Kurdish majority regions where the Syrian state forcibly introduced Arab majorities.

Overall the conference was clearly a success for the organisers, and provided interesting detail on what is happening on the ground. It is clear that the PYD and the associated DFNS and SDF represent by far the most progressive forces in the Syrian conflict. They deserve our critical support on the basis of: the right to Kurdish self-determination, their secularism and opposition to Islamist fundamentalists, their support for the rights of ethnic minorities, their championing of women's rights, their initiatives around ecology and their attempts to foster local self-organisation.

**Whilst they do not pose a consistent working-class socialist alternative, there are vastly better conditions for creating that alternative in the areas they control than in Daesh or Assad areas.**

## SWP poses as the fifth wheel of Corbynism

**By Martin Thomas**

**There were about 500 at the opening rally of the SWP's "Marxism" summer event in London on 6 July.**

That's fewer than in some previous years, I think, and an older crowd — about a third grey or white-haired. Nevertheless, enough not to sneeze at, and the closing rally on 9 July was near 1000.

More worrying was the politics. Most of the opening rally was given over to speakers, some eloquent, from the Barts cleaners' dispute, the LSE cleaners' dispute, a Grenfell Tower campaign, the Scottish further education lecturers' dispute, and the campaign about Edson da Costa's death in custody.

Two speakers had the job of presenting the SWP's political purpose.

Gerry Carroll, a "People before Profit" member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, made a speech most of which could have come from Sinn Féin.

The main difference from Sinn Féin was that Carroll denied that the Brexit vote of 23 June 2016 had strengthened the Tories.

Alex Callinicos, the main leader of the SWP, took up the same theme. In fact, he said, Britain has moved "sharply" left, and the right has suffered a "devastating defeat". The vote for Brexit was a product of squeezed real wages and growing class antagonisms.

(Huh? Tories and Ukipers voted for Brexit to show adherence to working-class struggle? So why did the big majority of left-minded people vote against Brexit?)

Callinicos's basis for that claim was the 8 June election result. He ignored the Tories'

high poll ratings from July 2016 to May 2017.

Yes, the boost to the right from the Brexit vote was not infinitely durable and powerful. Theresa May's hubristic election campaign, and the vigorous Labour manifesto, undid it, though arguably more by mobilising left-minded people who had previously not voted than by shifting people from right to left.

### CRITICISM

**Callinicos made no criticism of Corbyn's politics.**

He specifically endorsed Corbyn's current stand on Brexit, and said that the only "valid" reason for worrying about the Brexit vote was the status of EU citizens currently living in Britain. (So free movement for those people's friends, families, and neighbours to come to work or study in Britain — or for British young people to work or study in Europe — doesn't matter?)

He further praised Corbyn's speech on the Manchester bombings, hearing only that Corbyn had blamed the bombings on the UK's support for "the USA's war to dominate the Middle East". In fact Corbyn, rightly, was much further from the simplistic "blowback" theory than that; and in fact, much of Corbyn's speech was an implied call for more spending on the police.

Anyway, Callinicos praised Corbyn on those issues. He saw no need to raise any programmatic difference with Corbyn. Public ownership of the banks? None of that.

Callinicos still thought there was a role for the SWP. A left reformist government will be thwarted by "unelected centres of power"

unless there are demonstrations and strikes. And the SWP favours demonstrations and strikes. QED.

The closing rally was more polished. Islamist Moazzam Begg (see [bit.ly/2sZMZhf](http://bit.ly/2sZMZhf)) gave a polished liberal speech, getting a standing ovation both before and after.

Brid Smith from the Irish SWP spoke, and Amy Leather made the final speech. Since 2016 Leather has been joint national secretary of the SWP with Charlie Kimber. At the time of the "Delta" scandal in 2013-4, she was an oppositionist, criticising Kimber and Callinicos for being too "soft" and apologetic in response.

Leather's speech was better crafted than Callinicos's, and she did (though briefly) mention opposition to capitalism, support for socialism, and support for open borders. Her basic argument was the same as Callinicos's: Corbyn is doing what needs to be done in politics, but the SWP has a role in stirring up the strikes and demonstrations required to support him.

In truth there is, if not the great general shift to the left which Callinicos claimed, a new mobilisation of a new left-wing political generation. Socialist should be in among that new generation (which means in the Labour Party and Young Labour, not standing on the sidelines like the SWP).

**And our prime duty is to help them organise and also to develop and debate politically to regroup around a socialist programme which goes beyond the redistributive measures in the Labour manifesto and establishes a cooperative commonwealth in an internationalist perspective.**



# Make May resign!

According to the media over the 8-9 July weekend, the argument among Tory MPs is whether to replace Theresa May now by David Davis, or to wait to replace her until the autumn.

Even Tory party chair Grant Shapps has no confidence in May: "Theresa May will need to operate a completely different model to remain in power".

Getting May out will be a first step in bringing down the Tory government.

Only a first step. Tory writers proverbially boost their party as "the most formidable fighting machine in political history".

There is half-truth to it: under Davis or some other new leader, the Tories will not quietly fade, but dodge, swerve, and push to get through the storm.

Only half-truth. Many Tories now reckon their relentless policy of the last seven years, cuts after cuts, is unworkable. Many disagree with May's "hard Brexit".

In a 6 July opinion poll, Labour led the Tories by 8%, 46% to 38%. Opinion polls bounce around. Even allowing for that, it's a big result.

Labour touched 45% a few times in polls in late 2012 and early 2013, but hasn't been over 45% since spots before the 1997 and 2001 general elections (actual results: 43%, 42%).

The Tories can be forced out. Not just May.

Labour has rightly rejected Theresa May's call on 9 July for cooperation in working out policies. Labour should move on from that to full-scale, aggressive non-cooperation in Parliament, designed to make it impossible for the minority government to continue.

For example, Labour should refuse to "pair" absent MPs. It's a known tactic: the Australian Tories did it in 2010, when Labor formed a minority government, and Australian Labor did it initially in 2016, when the Tories (called Liberals in Australia) came out of an election with a tiny majority.

At the Bakers' Union conference in mid-June, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell rightly said: "What we need now is the TUC mobilised, every union mobilised, to get out on the streets. Just think if the TUC put out that call — that we want a million on the streets of London..."

The Labour Party should not wait for the TUC to do. The Labour Party itself should officially mobilise for the big demonstration



planned at the Tory party conference in Manchester on 1 October, and call its own demonstrations — on the NHS, on public sector pay, on school cuts — now.

## ORGANISED

**We should not just wait for a big demonstration in October. Every Labour voter or supporter becomes a ten-times-more-powerful factor when organised.**

Local Labour Parties should become campaigning centres, and include in their campaigning a push to make Labour councils defy Tory-imposed cuts. New young Labour supporters should be organised into active constituency Young Labour groups.

Industrially, it is a time to push forward every dispute. The bosses no longer have a confident and solid weight from the government behind them. No-one dares deny that the slide in real wages is a scandal.

A fourth strand is needed. In addition to parliamentary non-cooperation, protests, strikes, that fourth strand is the transformation of the Labour Party into a living, democratic, intelligent party, where policies are made through debate at every level of the party and the trade unions, rather than being

handed down by clever officials.

The 8 June manifesto was a great step forward, but it is not enough.

It leaves huge gaps. What about public ownership of the banks, whose profit-greedy machinations can wreck everything? What about freeing unions from the Thatcher anti-union laws as well as Cameron's? What about workers' control in industry? What about the international dimension?

Back in the 1970s, an Italian writer put a basic truth well: "The fact that we cannot spell out the alternative does not necessarily mean that it does not exist. It exists as a murmuring among the proletariat".

He paraphrased a revolutionary anarchist from the time of the Spanish Revolution of 1936-7: "The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. That world is growing in this minute".

**The murmuring grows louder. The job of socialists is to help it raise itself to a triumphant shout.**

**Solidarity 445 will be out on 26 July.**

## Labour should fight for free movement

"Undoubtedly", reports the Guardian (10 July), "the prime minister will need the support of the Labour front bench to implement Brexit".

The Tories should not get that support.

May's is a "hard", mean Brexit. It blocks people's free movement between Britain and Europe.

It offers EU citizens currently working and living in Britain a second-class-citizen future so limited that MEPs from all the European Parliament's main political groups have said they will veto the Brexit deal unless that is improved.

It restores trade barriers, with a vague promise of conjuring up new trade openings elsewhere.

It points towards cutting the protections which workers in Britain have got through EU harmonisation, so as to make the newly-walled-off British economy a "competitive" destination for global capital.

Nothing from the 23 June 2016 referendum obliges Labour to support that Brexit.

In fact Labour says it opposes that Brexit. But Labour backed the Tories in the Article 50 vote. After continuing to speak out for free movement for some months after 23 June 2016, Jeremy Corbyn eventually fell into line with his right-wing deputy Tom Watson.

The argument from Watson and his like is that the referendum vote created a democratic mandate which Labour must respect.

For the Tories in office to take a skewed snapshot vote and interpret it as a blank cheque for their interpretation is not democracy. Democracy is an open and ongoing process in which a majority collective will is formed, adjusted, implemented, with always the possibility of minorities arguing back and becoming majorities.

On the latest poll, 44% think the 23 June majority was right, 45% wrong. Only 26% expect the government to get a good deal. 31% expect a poor deal and 15% no deal at all. (So nearly half of those supporting Brexit expect a bad outcome from it!)

Asked to choose between barriers against immigration from Europe and free trade, people went 58% for trade-plus-immigration against 42% for barriers. (YouGov, 23 June).

One poll (Survation, 18 June) has shown a majority for a second referendum, on the eventual deal, though others show majorities against that. In the event of an impasse in Parliament — and Labour should aim for that! — a second referendum would probably become unavoidable and popular. If it comes, it should give the right to vote to 16-17 year olds and to EU citizens living in Britain, the people most concerned.

Labour's studied ambiguity — opposing free movement, but setting that message to pro-migrant music; pledging to support Brexit, but appearing as the party of "soft" Brexit; accepting exit from the single market, but wanting to get (how?) the same advantages as the single market — that studied ambiguity seems to have "worked" electorally, for the moment.

**But politics is not just about what seems to work for a moment. It is about principle and consistency.**

## Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website

We need to build a left that is open to debate and is serious about self-education. Our website, including its extensive archive could help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it's all there on the Workers' Liberty website.

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news cover-



age is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any

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amount will help.

At Ideas for Freedom, 1-2 July, we raised £2970. Thanks to all who contributed.



# Why is the left in disarray

The introduction from a new book about the left\*. By Sean Matgamna

*"Tell the truth and shame the devil"*

*"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives — these are the rules."*  
Leon Trotsky

**The story in the Bible about the Tower of Babel is well known. Humankind starts to build a high tower so it can climb up to the heavens.**

Offended by this urge to independence in creatures he has created to be his supplicants and playthings, God punishes them. Where before there had been only one language, humankind wakes up one morning speaking many — all the languages of the earth. God has ensured that the divided humanity will not now be able to unite in such enterprises as building a tower up to heaven. Thus the old story-makers tried to account for the existence of many languages in the one human species.

The 20th century and after has done something very like that to the anti-capitalist left. Clear-seeming and once more or less precise terms — "democracy", "imperialism", "anti-imperialism", "socialism", "revolution" — that corresponded, more or less, to real things and relationships in the world in which the socialists existed, now convey nothing that is clear without additional explanation. All the key terms now have more than one, and sometimes many, meanings. Thus, most of the time they have no clear meaning; they express and convey emotion, not reason. They are tools of demagoguery more than of reasoned discourse. Concepts and words have been stretched and reshaped, and then stretched, redefined, redesigned and reshaped again and again to cover many different and sometimes contradictory realities. They clog our minds and cloud our political eyes and judgement. Our language of politics is decayed, disablingly.

Where different languages have clearly defined meanings for words, translation and dialogue is possible. Where language has rotted and been corrupted by misuse or deliberate misrepresentation to such an extent that many or most of the key words have lost precise meaning, understanding is impeded and communication is often impossible. So too is useful polemic. Manipulative demagoguery, the use of words to convey and evoke feelings, wishes, self-love, aggression, contempt, adoration, takes their place. That is one of the reasons why the left is divided into an archipelago of mutually uncomprehending segments, why it lives in self-isolated atolls. Incomprehension, in turn, deepens the intra-left divisions. Our capacity to think coherently about politics, history, society, ourselves

and our history, and our capacity to communicate with each other, are enfeebled and often in some ways destroyed.

How did the left rooted in the tradition of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Karl Liebknecht, James Connolly, Rosa Luxemburg, Clara Zetkin, Leo Jogiches, Keir Hardie, and all those whose lives made up the socialist movement of the past, get into the state it is in now? Why is the left in disarray?

Left-wing people are people who by political instinct and conviction side with the oppressed and the exploited, with the victims of exclusion, of malign power, of cruel indifference. We have fought against racism, for women's equality with men, and against all the social aristocracies — aristocracies of birth and genealogy, of gender, of the purse, of the skin. Defined broadly, the left in history has been a tremendous force for progress, enlightenment, liberty, tolerance, freedom, democracy, and the right to free criticism of religion and of other official political and social ideologies. It has fought tyrannies and tyrants, and the rule of mind-stifling priests and prelates. It has fought for civil rights and civil liberties, for free speech and free thought, and against censorship. It has been the locomotive for cranking history forward. It has organised and shaped labour movements that have established and broadened working-class rights against employers and their states; it has lurched the whole of society upwards. In the 20th century the authentic left fought fascism, the theocracies of different religions (Catholic, Islamic, Shinto), Stalinism, capitalism, and plutocracy.

The left, in a word, has fought for consistent democracy — for all-pervasive political, social, and intellectual democracy. The real left, in any situation, are the Consistent Democrats.

Not all of the left, all of the time, has embodied all of these virtues, of course. There is another side to the story. The left is produced, shaped, and reshaped, by different social environments, and, at any given moment, by its own prior history. It has had different strands, traditions, levels of awareness, degrees of consistency and coherence. It has had mutually antagonistic strands at war with each other. People thinking of themselves as of the left have sometimes done indefensible things and taken up terrible attitudes and positions, sometimes suicidally.

On antisemitism, for instance: in the Dreyfus affair, some socialists affected an above-the-battle incomprehension. Why, with their minds on the great structural elements in society, like the economy, should they bother with such a thing? Some socialists thought that agitation against "the Rothschilds" — wealthy Jews, portrayed as the epitome both of capitalism and of Jewishness — a permissible form of socialist agitation. Frederick Engels remonstrated: "antisemitism is merely the reaction of declining medieval social strata against a modern society consisting essentially of capitalists and wage-labourers, so that all it serves are reactionary ends under a purportedly socialist cloak... In addition, the



The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 signalled the beginning of the end for the Stalinist states.

antisemite presents the facts in an entirely false light... there are here in England and in America thousands upon thousands of Jewish proletarians..." (19 April 1890).

Some strands in the German Communist Party, in a brief attempt to create a "national Bolshevism" in the early 1920s (1920s, not 1930s), played with antisemitic agitation. The heroic Russian populist movement, Narodnaya Volya, welcomed the epoch-defining anti-Jewish pogrom movement that broke out in 1881 as a positive expression of the people's will to rebel against their conditions. In another vein, some socialist insurrectionists in early 1920s South Africa who had raised the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite for a White South Africa!" went the gallows singing The Red Flag. The very influential early 20th century US socialist novel, Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, has a chapter that is viciously racist against African Americans. Etc.

In such cases, left-wingers acted contrary to their own values of consistent democracy, judicious breadth of view, egalitarianism, and rationality in politics as in everything else. Other left-wingers knew that, and talked, wrote, and acted differently, criticising the socialists who fell short. To a great extent, socialism developed, made and re-made itself, by criticism and self-criticism. Vladimir Lenin used, as the epigraph of his polemic *What Is To Be Done?*, Ferdinand Lassalle's comment: "Party struggles lend a party

strength and vitality; the greatest proof of a party's weakness is its diffuseness and the blurring of clear demarcations".

The South African socialists, shouting "Workers of the World Unite", and nonsensically coupling it with "For a White South Africa", might have been the paradigm for the catastrophe that overwhelmed the left in the mid and late 1920s, when much of the revolutionary left was conquered by Stalinism in varying dilutions. The basic socialist critique of capitalism came to be fused with positive programs of Stalinist totalitarianism. That introduced a system of having one attitude to oppression in capitalist society, and a radically different attitude to the same or worse oppression in Russia and later in the other Stalinist states (China, for instance) — a pervasive system of double standards, and thus of no standards, in measuring social affairs. It established an all-pervading "double-ness" of outlook, attitude, feeling, judgement, language, which rendered much of the left radically incoherent. It merged genuine left-wing standards and attitudes into hybrids, encompassing their opposites. On imperialism, for the great instance which affects the left still. It amalgamated the proper socialist attitudes to the crimes of capitalism with an opposite attitude to similar, and very often worse, crimes of Stalinism. In its perennial peace campaigning, it fused appeals against the horrors of war with sly manipulation in favour of Russian foreign policy, whatever it

\* *The Left in Disarray*. See p. 8 for review.



# ny?



was at that point. Those contradictions and tensions produced strong seams of hysteria in left-wing politics. We have still not purged the left of those catastrophic amalgams and hysterias

This book tries to account for the state of the left by analysing the historical and political evolution of the old 19th and 20th century left and its ideas, its defeats by the forces of Stalinism, of fascism, and of plutocracy, and their impact on its ideas. This discussion of what Stalinism did to the left is intended to make it easier to understand the character, causes, and faults of the contemporary left, and to help those who want to fight for a more consistent and more authentic left.

## II

**From the collapse of the USSR, until the onset of the 2008 credit crisis, international capitalism went through a vast expansion under the banners of free trade, neo-liberalism, and globalisation.**

That produced social and ideological conditions that were very unfriendly to the idea that capitalism needs to be replaced with socialism, that the working class can and should make a socialist revolution, that historically capitalism

has outlived itself. After the fall of Russian and East European Stalinism, we went through a riot of bourgeois triumphalism, and an accelerated, disarray and decline, po-

litical, moral, intellectual, of the “actually existing left”. The left was faced with the need to redefine itself. In so far as it has redefined itself, it has since 2001 been in terms of an alliance with one of the most reactionary forces on the planet, “political Islam” – Islamic clerical fascism. And these conditions have helped many ex-Stalinists mutate into born-again advocates of bourgeois democracy and capitalism – something, all in all, better than their former Stalinist political mindset. Working-class socialist democracy was never even potentially real for those jaded power-worshippers, and naturally they do not regard it as a possibility now.

Since the collapse of the Stalinist Russian empire in 1991, world capitalist power has traded on the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism. There never was; there never will be: there cannot be. We should, as someone at a debate told us once, “marvel at the market’s gifts to mankind”. Be grateful for the things God gives you! Don’t dream, don’t scheme, don’t rebel! For, warn the ideologues – the old Labour Party reform-socialists among them – if you rebel, then you will stumble into a nightmare of state terrorism, into the Gulag, into the Stalinist archipelago of slave labour camps and mass murder.

They build philosophies on the claim that Stalinism was Bolshevism; that Bolshevism was not overthrown in a Stalinist counter-revolution, as in fact it was, but continued and developed by the logic of its own inner nature into Stalinism. The Stalinist counter-revolution against the working class and against Bolshevism was really, they claim, Bolshevism itself in essentials. Bolshevism, which fought Stalinism to the death of the rearguard Bolsheviks – that was only immature, infant Stalinism. The anti-Stalinist Bolsheviks were only fighting against their other self. In all this, the triumphant bourgeoisie has merely appropriated the core lies of Stalinism and put them to work. The story is nonsense in terms of the facts – nonsense as ridiculous as Stalin’s indictment of the old Bolsheviks in the mid-thirties as having worked for British and other intelligence services when they were leading the 1917 Revolution. Yet aspects of the post-Stalinist left, for instance the accommodation of the ostensible left to Islamist terrorism, have been as if designed to prove the bourgeois ideologues’ point.

## III

**But the story doesn’t end there. The end of the story has not been written yet.**

In the socialist beginning is the class strug-

gle. The world’s working class is expanding; it has, maybe, doubled in size over the last 30 years. Capitalism is still rearing up fresh armies of its own gravediggers.

The movement that has gathered around Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell to reclaim the Labour Party for the working class is a tremendous event, and for socialists and labour-movement activists and well-wishers, an inspiring and heartening one. It opens opportunities for socialists and socialism that had been blocked off for two decades since the Blair-Brown coup in the Labour Party in 1994-7. The socialist left, however, is in no state to do the positive work for socialism that is now possible. It is organised in an archipelago of sects. Each group’s Marxism is in the main an in-house Marxism, some of it strange and bizarre, specific to the group. Like the overshadowing statues on Easter Island, grotesque personality cults loom in and above the left. Almost all the groupings are organised as factional tyrannies. They forbid or stifle internal discussion, and, for practical purposes, most of them, most of the time, outlaw dissent. Reason there is an abused and terror-stricken, half-starved, prisoner. Relations between the different groups are blindly hostile; inter-group discussion is usually shouts of abuse from the factional trenches. In some groups an aura of quasi-religious awe surrounds their special positions and doctrines and high priests. Demagoguery reigns, and demagoguery ruins. Yet the economic crisis that began in 2007-8 has exposed to many people the fundamental nature of capitalism – its instability, its needless cruelties, its domination by billionaire predators who run the system for their own benefit. The need for a vigorous, intellectually receptive and productive, anti-capitalist left is urgent and pressing.

## IV

**It can now be seen that the collapse and disarray in the left in the aftermath of 1991 was inevitable, after the way the left had been shaped and schooled in the preceding decades.**

Though the old European Stalinism, holding state power in many states, is dead, socialists, including the heirs of the old anti-Stalinists, live still, as is argued here, in the grip of the moral, political and intellectual chaos created by Stalinism. Cultural inertia is a gigantic and pervasive force in history. Stalinism was for many decades a world-wide entity, affecting not its own full or partial devotees alone, but many others. Stalinist ideology combined states of minds,

feelings, reasonings or refusals to reason, doctrines, and beliefs, hybridised with concerns valid and important in themselves. The peace campaigns after about 1950 are the best examples here. There are many others. Much of the old culture is still alive on the left.

It is the contention of this book that the moral and political crisis of the present-day left is fundamentally a confusion of ideas, of identity and of historical perspective. Of an unexplored, and often startlingly unknown, history of the left itself, and of our language of politics. The crisis of the would-be left today consists in the continued influence within it, in its ways of seeing the world, of organising and thinking, of un-purged or often half-purged, essentially unrecognised, Stalinist politics, patterns, attitudes, and residues.

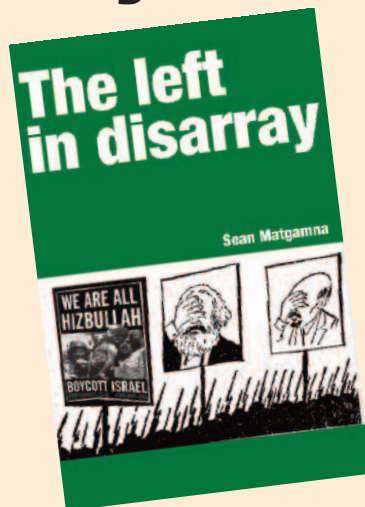
Stalinism is dead as state power in Europe. But Stalinism wasn’t just state power. It was a vast interlocking political culture, containing a set of ideas, attitudes, states of mind, moralities, antagonisms, animosities. If that culture died with Stalinist state power in Europe, then this book is an anachronistic, a case of refusal to move on, an unhealthy obsession with old, irrelevant events and issues. The point is that as a political culture, Stalinism is not dead. It survives even in much of that left which defines its historical anti-Stalinism with Trotsky’s name. It survives in the ideological chaos that still engulfs the left. The concerns of this book are not, alas, only matters of history. One of its aims is to speed Stalinism on its way into the void of outlived, negated, and learned-from history.

This book offers an analysis and an indictment of the contemporary left, written from within the left and from a left-wing point of view. It is part of a drive to purge the debris of Stalinism which, it argues, pervades the contemporary left. It is a companion volume to *Can Socialism Make Sense? An Unfriendly Dialogue* (2016).

A note on terminology. It would be misleading to talk about “the left” without qualification, in part because this book is in many ways a self-criticism. We, the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty, are ourselves of the left; and it is argued here that on many issues, on free speech for instance, and on Zionophobia and Judeophobia, the ostensible left today has taken over positions that were for a very long time the preserve of the right. Thus various terms are used – addled left, ostensible left, kitsch left, confused left.

**Kitsch left is the more precise: much of the left is in the grip of inorganic, pastiche, imitative, incoherent politics.**

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# The mess we're in — and the way out

Paul Hampton reviews *The left in disarray* by Sean Matgamna

**Why is the revolutionary left in such a mess today, despite the economic problems of the last decade, the crises of many neoliberal states, the enormous size of the global waged working class, the potential power of the trade union movement and the signs of revival in left politics?**

The answers to why the Marxist left is in such a state are comprehensively hammered home in this collection of essays. The book is a tour de force history of the revolutionary left over the past one hundred years.

The short answer is: Stalinism. But the syphilis of Stalinism is not only about the states that were or still are ruled by Stalinists. It is also about how the ideology of Stalinism has taken root even among the anti-Stalinist and social democratic left. Sloughing off this Stalinism is an essential prerequisite for reviving the authentic Marxist left.

## WHY DISARRAY?

**Matgamna tells the story of the degeneration of the revolutionary left with great verve.**

The revolutionary left that emerged from the 1917 Russian revolution was essentially healthy. It had opposed the First World War and arose triumphant to lead the Russian workers to power. These revolutionaries formed the Communist International, a school of revolutionary strategy that by the early 1920s had built mass communist parties made up of the finest working class militants internationally.

The principal blow came with the isolation of the Russian workers' state, already depleted by three years of bitter civil war and compounded by the backwardness of the inherited Russian social formation. Concomitantly, no communist party was able to lead the workers to power outside Russia. The result was the bureaucratisation of the Russian workers' state. The bureaucratic tentacles strangled the organs of soviet democracy, the trade unions and finally the Bolshevik party — the last living mechanism through which the Russian workers could exercise their rule.

The Stalinists "revolution from above" defeated the Left Opposition, imposed forced industrialisation and collectivisation, and destroyed democratic, national and civil rights. After 1928 the new bureaucratic ruling class held the levers of control over the surplus product and inaugurated a totalitarian semi-slave state. After that, the Communist Parties acted as the overseas agents of Russian foreign policy, as well as incipient bureaucratic ruling classes in places where they got a foothold.

The monstrous form of the Stalinist counter-revolution threw most of the revolutionary left back to a state of reactionary anti-capitalism, shorn of working class agency and of the consistently democratic programme they had once espoused. The tiny forces that coalesced around Trotsky put up a spirited rearguard action, keeping alive the flame of authentic Marxism during the 1920s and 1930s.

But the Trotskyist movement itself was wrecked on the cusp of the Second World War, its main forces unable to explain the expansion of Stalinism outside of the USSR and later to understand the revival of capitalism in the post-war epoch. Most of the post-Trot-



**Stalinist forced labour camp. The Stalinist counter-revolution was an epoch-defining blow against the left**

sky Trotskyists embraced the Stalinist advance into Eastern Europe, China and beyond as somehow creating "workers' states" (without the active intervention of workers), or painted despotic post-colonial regimes as somehow the embodiment of permanent revolution.

Matgamna itemises the bitter array of failures in the years after the Second World War. Among the litany of terrible errors were:

- Support for North Korea's war in 1950
- Failure to support the East German workers uprising in 1953
- Uncritical support for the Vietnamese Stalinists
- Uncritical support for the Castro Stalinists in Cuba after 1960
- Soft backing for Mao's Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution
- Opposition to Israel's right to exist after the 1967 war
- Backing Catholic chauvinism in Northern Ireland
- Opposition to the UK joining the European Union from 1971
- Fantasies about the murderous Khmer Rouge in Cambodia
- Support for clerical-fascist theocracy in Iran from 1979
- Support for Russia's murderous war in Afghanistan in 1980
- Support for Argentina's invasion of the Falklands in 1982
- Backing Iran against Iraq in their sub-imperial conflict during the 1980s
- Siding with Saddam Hussein after his invasion of Kuwait 1990-91
- Support for Serbia's assault on the Kosovars in 1999

- Softness and refusing to condemn Al Qaeda in 2001

- Support for Saddam in the 2003 war
- Uncritical backing of Islamist Sunni and Shia militias in Iraq, even as they slaughtered workers.

Matgamna eviscerates the justifications used by sections of the left for these stances. He is scathing about the "anti-imperialism of fools", a species of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" that leads to support for despotism under the cover of anti-Americanism. He also denounces "left antisemitism", defined as the exceptional denial of fundamental national rights to Jewish people (including the right to their own state) and demonisation of all Jewish people for the crimes of the Israeli state. Sloughing off these rationalisations for reactionary politics is essential for renewing the revolutionary left.

Matgamna's descriptions of the practices and ideologies of the post-Stalinist left are often thought-provoking. The left Stalinist embalming of Lenin is described as the work of a "Leninolator" and of "Lenin-olatry". The Stalinist picture of the world is "totalitarian utopianism" and the former Trotskyists who capitulated to Stalin "self-depoliticised ex-Bolshevik social engineers". Liberal interventionist are dubbed "mañana third campists", their "socialism" always for the distant tomorrow. The text also has engaging cultural references — tales of Prester John, Kim Philby, slaves crucified on the Appian Way, Marlon Brando and others.

Avid followers of the left will enjoy Matgamna's pen portraits of the principal leaders of the post-war Trotskyist groups in Britain.

Gerry Healy led the SLL and WRP until it exploded after his sexual abuse of members was made public in 1985. By then Healy had sold the organisation to the Libyan, Iraqi, and other Arab states, as an agency to spy on the left and refugees. The Healyites were characterised by their millenarian catastrophism, their frozen words of Trotsky used to justify political lurches, and by gangster politics.

Ernest Mandel was the principal theoretician of the post-Trotsky Fourth International, responsible for rationalising its adaptation to the Stalinist "workers' states" in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Cuba and Vietnam. Mandel died in 1995, a few years after the collapse of Stalinism had destroyed his theoretical edifice, leaving a movement clinging to a venerable name while desperately wondering where the "revolutionary process" had gone.

Ted Grant spawned the current Socialist Party and Socialist Appeal. He redefined socialism as "nationalise the top 200 monopolies" and an enabling act. He peddled the fantasies of "proletarian Bonapartism", the military substitutes for working-class agency under Stalinism, but also in Syria, Portugal and latterly Venezuela. Grant's supporters eulogise the capitulation of Liverpool city council while evading concrete political questions with fantasy sloganeering. Grant did not teach his followers to think, but to do political parrot work.

Tony Cliff was a purveyor of toy-town Bolshevism, a man who bent the stick so far on the revolutionary party that the SWP came to represent a parody of third period Stalinist mono-factions. Cliff joked about trying to find your way around the London Underground with a map of the Paris metro, but the legacy he left was more akin to a map of the Moscow sewers. For the SWP, nothing is forbidden in pursuit of organisational advantage. This makes for an increasingly incoherent group that is now a galaxy away from the Marxism of its origins.

## SIGNS OF HOPE

**If the history of the left is so miserable, what examples of hope are there? There is much to learn from the small third camp Trotskyist tradition around Max Shachtman and Hal Draper which survived during the 1940s and 1950s.**

Some of the left have sobered up over Syria, where few socialists could support the Daesh terror even by implication, and where most recoiled from any support for the barbarous Assad regime. Similarly, the Brexit vote saw sections of the left abandon their previous nationalist positions. There is something of a revival in social democratic reformist projects. The bigger picture includes some disarray among our main enemies, the ruling classes, as illustrated by Trump and May.

Most of all, the politics of the AWL provides the most important embodiment of hope. The AWL has forged a living tradition of rational Marxist politics, with realistic assessments of the great global events of the last half century and a series of interventionist political conclusions aimed at mobilising the working class and transforming the labour movement. The AWL has renewed the great Marxist tradition from a century ago. We do not start from scratch. All is not lost.

**Much of the left may be in disarray, but the forces of independent, third camp Marxism are alive. With our help, the new generation of socialists will make this politics their watchword.**



# Turkish workers against the military

**The second part of an account of capitalist development and working-class struggle in Turkey, by Marksist Tutum.**

**There were many large student demonstrations against the Democratic Party (DP) government in its last days of DP rule (after 1950). This was the background for the 27 May 1960 military coup in which ex-Prime Minister Menderes and two of his prominent ministers were summarily tried and hanged.**

Both the Turkish industrial bourgeoisie and imperialism welcomed this coup, because, whatever the intentions of the lower ranking officers who led it, it was ultimately to their benefit.

These officers believed they had carried out a revolution to defend and protect the liberties and institutions of the Republic, introduced by Ataturk, and against the undemocratic practices of the DP! But their real intentions were shown in the first political statement they made after the coup: "We are respectful to all international treaties. We are loyal to NATO and CENTO."

Shortly after the coup, the officers called on the CHP, the party created by Mustafa Kemal, to take power. The CHP represented the urban bourgeoisie gathered around İş Bankası (Business Bank), the bourgeois intelligentsia and military-civil bureaucracy. These circles wanted a planned capitalist industrialisation and for foreign capital to be attracted. They founded a "state planning organisation", to prepare a five-year plan with the help of the imperialist west.

The regular routine of the parliamentary regime in Turkey returned and in 1965 the Justice Party [AP] came to power. Though it had been founded as an extension of the DP, now, unlike in the past, it also represented the industrial bourgeoisie. The AP gave priority to industry, especially to the assembly-line industry. This led to an inevitable growth in concentration and centralisation of capital.

In the 60s the whole society began to prosper politically and culturally. All sections of the society began to set up its organisations, associations, co-operatives, etc. Prohibited and suppressed leftist books began to be published openly. Socialist ideas attracted a broad section of intellectuals.

In 1961 a legal socialist party TIP (Workers Party of Turkey) was founded, which would become the first mass party in the history of the republic. It was founded by trade unionists who were joined by socialist intellectuals. From the very beginning TIP was very popular, both in the towns and in the rural areas. In 1965 the TIP got 15 members of Parliament elected. These successes encouraged the workers, and in 1963 a Code of Strike and Collective Bargaining was won.

At this time there was only the state-controlled union confederation, Turk-Is, and it became quickly apparent that it was unable and unwilling to support the rising economic struggles of the working class. A strong opposition developed within the Turk-Is. The new generation of workers and their leaders were critical about the kind of unionism that is servile to the bourgeois state, under the guise of "non-political unionism". Four unions (Maden-Is, Lastik-Is, Basın-Is, Gıda-Is) were expelled from Turk-Is and founded a new confederation, the DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions) in February 1967. These unions were at the fore-

front of the struggles in the private sector.

The actions of youth and the wave of general strikes in Europe in 1968 immediately influenced the youth in Turkey and mobilised them. And the wave of struggles of the working class that began at that time also went beyond the legal framework of the bourgeoisie, increasing in intensity and breadth, using such tactics as factory occupations, boycotts, and outlawed strikes. Although they were developed spontaneously they all contained a revolutionary essence. These were immediately accompanied by the rising demands of the youth in favour of national independence and the demonstrations and land occupations of the peasants in the rural areas. The DISK got stronger, and also the workers belonging to Turk-Is began struggling to leave it and become members of the DISK.

In 1968 the only legal mass left party was TIP. Many leftist circles and individuals, with different political views carried out work within this party. The illegal TKP did not try to have a separate organisation until 1973 and it worked within TIP, too. In fact the majority of the leaders of TIP were the old TKP members. In spite of this, there was a complete gap between the old cadres of TKP and the younger generation.. Yet the TKP continued to have an effect, directly or indirectly, on many political formations in Turkey, not excluding the TIP.

Guerrillaism and Maoism began to be organised at this time, particularly among the youth. TIP, which had united various left fractions, gradually began to experience a chronic split. Since then there has never been a comparable mass legal party of the working class in Turkey.

At the same time the state started to organise the religious reactionary movements and direct them against workers and students. The Arab-American oil companies – like ARAMCO – directly financed these reactionary organisations.

The government brought in laws measures to close the DISK. On June 15 and 16 a workers demonstration took place, involving over 150,000 workers in Istanbul and Izmit. The streets were shaken by the strength and virility of the demonstrations during these two days. The police and army attacked the workers with guns, resulting in three deaths and over 200 injured. Martial law was declared and a curfew lasting for two months was imposed.

## 1970-1980

**This period is that of the acceleration of the monopolisation in industry and the fusion of bank and industrial capital.**

The model of industrialisation was based on foreign debts and "import substitution". For instance the automobile industry and durable consumer goods industry in Turkey were installed as assembly-line industries from the beginning. Components were imported from abroad and then assembled in Turkey.

The fact that the workers' movement had developed by leaps and bounds and had become increasingly militant, and anti-American acts scared both the ruling classes in Turkey and the US imperialism. Moreover, currents of anti-Americanism and national independence had been developing within the army. The ruling powers staged another military coup on 12 March 1971 and closed the parliament. As it was first portrayed as a leftist coup. Certain petty-bourgeois revolutionists were extremely misled.

In this period of extraordinarily oppressive, semi-military regimes, between 1971



**1960 military coup**

and 1974, both the workers' movement and the developing socialist movement received a harsh blow. TIP was closed down. The activities of the DISK trade unions and the youth associations, were banned. Thousands of socialist intellectuals, workers, revolutionary youths, unionists etc. were arrested and tortured. The leftist movement completely disintegrated and the organisations scattered. The Turkish bourgeois state hanged three leaders of the youth movement on the charge of violating the constitution.

This dictatorship changed the relatively more liberal Constitution of 1961 by abolishing all the democratic articles of the old constitution. It introduced new anti-socialist articles into the Penal Code. In 1973 new elections were held and in 1974 Bülent Ecevit's CHP came to power.

Ideologically there were two main tendencies among the now disintegrated left. First, the traditional Stalinist left tendency that aimed at organising among the working class and trade union movement, and followed the line of the official CPSU. Secondly, the revolutionary populist tendency, which was organised among the student youth, and the petty bourgeois layers of towns and provinces. The ideological nurturing source of this tendency was also Stalinism. Their political line was embodied in Maoism and guerrillaism.

Although there were some tiny intellectual circles defending Trotsky's ideas and criticising Stalinism, they could not form an active political organisation among the left movement, or even a current of thought, because the Stalinist current was so very strong. At the time among the leftists of Turkey there was, and there still is, a strong negative prejudice against Trotsky and Trotskyism. In their opinion Trotsky is an "enemy of Leninism", "an adventurist", "a traitor", etc.

In 1973 the TKP decided to organise anew on an illegal basis within the country. Even with illegality it enjoyed a rapid and improving popularity. It had also created a broad legal mass movement on its periphery, which was able to affect the trade union movement to a great extent, by dominating the leadership of DISK. Between 1970 and 1980 many members of this illegal TKP were elected to the executive committees of many unions and legal mass organisations. There were also legal associations of youth, teachers, technical employees, and women, having tens of thousands of members, founded directly under the party's control. And there were hundreds of secret party cells composed of workers in the factories.

This method of organising by the TKP was, as a matter of fact, correct. Unfortunately, both its political line and leadership were en-

tirely social reformist and class collaborationist. It followed the line decided by Moscow without challenge; the inevitable result was a split in the party, between those wishing to take a more revolutionary road and the reformist.

Under the direction of the TKP, the DISK organised a mass rally in 1976 to celebrate May Day, something which had been prohibited for 50 years. 200,000 people joined the rally and the trade union movement organised the most prolonged strikes in the history of Turkey. The most militant union — the metal workers — started the strikes, which covered 120 factories in the private sector, with 40,000 and would last 11 months. A wide and strong solidarity movement formed around these strikes.

In 1977 over 500,000 people, from every section of society, took part in the May Day celebrations in Istanbul. But this great rally was to witness a bloody provocation, staged by the American and Turkish secret services — the demonstrators were subjected deliberately to volley fire by contra-guerrilla teams, placed in the surrounding buildings (Taksim Square). 40 demonstrators were killed.

After then, the bourgeoisie stepped up its counter-revolutionary provocations. Ecevit was already preparing to break the influence of the TKP in DISK and to pacify DISK. Workers' leaders and revolutionaries began to be attacked by paramilitary-armed gangs, led by the fascist MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), in the cities, especially in the working-class districts. Death lists were being published in the fascist papers, naming the people being targeted for the next murder. In this campaign nearly 5,000 people were killed.

Eventually, they killed the president of DISK, Kemal Türkler, the leader of the metal workers. Over 500,000 workers attended his funeral in Istanbul. The working class movement began to retreat. When the economic and political crisis intensified just before 1980, tanks, cannons and guns were called in once more. On September 12, 1980 Turkey witnessed its third military coup.

- 650,000 people were arrested, the majority of them tortured,
- Over 50,000 people were forced to migrate to European countries.
- 700 death sentences were demanded, 480 sentenced to death, eventually 48 were hanged,
- Around 200 people were killed under torture,
- **23,677 associations were banned.**

**• The final part of this abridged article will be published in *Solidarity* 445.**



# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
  - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
  - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
  - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
  - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
  - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
  - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
  - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
  - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

**If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!**



## Events

### Saturday 15 July

**Rally to support the Barts' strike**  
12Noon, Turner Street, Royal London Hospital E1 1BB.

### Sunday 16 July

**Fair Funding for all Schools: Carnival Against the Cuts**  
Noon, Parliament Square, London SW1P 3BD  
[bit.ly/2sPfiFh](http://bit.ly/2sPfiFh)

### Monday 17 July

**Bethnal Green builds bridges open meeting**  
6.30pm, Oxford House, Derbyshire St, Bethnal Green, London E2 6HG  
[bit.ly/2sMlofe](http://bit.ly/2sMlofe)

### Tuesday 18 July

**Haringey radical readers discuss 'Walden' by Henry David Thoreau**  
7pm, Big Green Bookshop, Brampton Park Road, London N22 6BG  
[bit.ly/2sM9li7](http://bit.ly/2sM9li7)

### Monday 31 July

**Protest at LSE: Justice for cleaners**  
Noon, LSE Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE  
[bit.ly/2u4ZS9z](http://bit.ly/2u4ZS9z)

**Have an event you want listing?**  
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# Left wins conference delegates

## LABOUR

**By Keith Road**

**Good news for the Labour left and socialists in the Labour Party.**

Many members who joined in 2015 and 2016 have now become eligible to stand as delegates to Labour's annual conference (24-27 September) and there has been a significant increase in the number of delegate registrations. Many Constituency Labour Parties are now sending as many delegates as they are entitled to, rather than just one delegate, or none, as so many did during the Blair/ Brown/ Miliband years.

Nominations coming in for membership of the Conference Arrangements Committee and National Constitutional Council have gone four to one in favour of the

left-backed candidates. This is significant; the CAC in particular will have a big influence over the conduct of the 2018 conference, where many motions on rule changes, aiming to democratise the party, motions that have been proposed this year, will be finalised, discussed and voted on.

A big influx of left-leaning delegates and newer and younger members attending conference has the potential to shake up it up and help get the left prepared to win more influence in the Party.

Momentum is gathering information on who has been selected as a delegate and unlike last year, has promised to be organised during the conference to coordinate delegates.



It remains to be seen exactly what this coordination will be, but we hope it can promote genuine debate and thus stop some of the stage-managed feel of previous conferences.

**Regular delegate meetings, coordinating with the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy on a new delegates' briefing, and producing material for delegates explaining the business and highlighting the key votes would all be a good start.**

## MPs should not have a "job for life"

**Labour MP for Derby North Chris Williamson has rightly said that MPs cannot expect a job for life and should not be surprised if their local parties wish to replace them.**

"There are interest groups and individual MPs in this party who think it's their God-given right to rule. No MP should be guaranteed a job for life and it's crucial that we all get with the times.

"MPs elected in earlier phases of this party run the risk of failing to understand what is really going on out there in society. Although this Party's hundreds of thousands of new members were once demonised, the election has shown that the political instincts of these members are in line with popular opinion. For our party to succeed these members must be listened to."

Unfortunately, this argument for basic democracy in the Party, the

idea that Labour members should be able to choose their representative, has once again caused consternation. Shadow Education Secretary and Corbyn supporter Angela Rayner felt obliged to call for a vague unity and for Labour to stop looking inward.

The issue flared up after Momentum supporters won a majority on the executive of Liverpool Wavertree Labour Party and publicly told their MP, Luciana Berger, she should "get on board quite quickly" if she wanted to avoid being challenged for her seat.

Rule changes on trigger ballots and attempts to reform Labour selection procedures will be discussed at the 2018 Party conference. One such motion says;

"If a CLP is represented in parliament by a member of the PLP, then a timetable for selecting the next Westminster parliamentary candidate shall commence no sooner than 36 months and complete no

later than 48 months after the election. The sitting member of parliament shall be automatically included on the shortlist of candidates, unless they request to retire or resign from the PLP."

It is unclear what Corbyn thinks about these proposals. He has said he does not want to see re-selections and believes the trigger ballot process is adequate. However there has been manoeuvring behind the scenes to try and shake up the bureaucracy of the party. Other sources have said; "Jeremy has not taken a position on any reforms of the system for the future and that would be dealt with by the party at the conference."

Ultimately the issue will be put to the vote at a conference, but for now the Conference Arrangements Committee, including some of the union nominees, is hostile.

**There is no guarantee the issue will make it through for debate in 2018.**

## Stop the Purge relaunches

**By Sacha Ismail**

**The Stop the Labour Purge campaign, which was quiet during the election, is relaunching to decisively end the purge, reinstated expelled activists, and get the party's disciplinary procedures changed.**

Its first action post-election has been getting five Constituency Labour Parties to submit a rule change (constitutional change) on the purging of socialists to Labour Party conference — despite only having a few weeks to do it.

If they are not ruled out by the Conference Arrangements Committee, rule changes are usually taken the year after they are sub-

mitted, so this rule change would go to conference in 2018. It deletes the text which says that members can be expelled if they "join and/or support a political organisation other than an official Labour group or other unit of the party".

Taken literally this would allow the expulsion of a majority of members — certainly of anyone who joins Momentum, Progress, Labour First, Greenpeace, Amnesty, etc.... In fact, at the moment, is it used as an excuse for expelling members of socialist organisations such as Workers' Liberty and Socialist Appeal. It is a license for the party machine to purge others in future if they become more confident.

Expelled members are launching

challenges and demanding appeals. If you have been expelled or suspended but haven't done this yet, you should. The campaign can help.

We need to demand the leadership gets serious about fighting the purge, and meanwhile launch the widest possible grassroots campaign.

**Stop the Labour Purge will be launching other initiatives in the coming weeks, including a statement for Labour Party activists to sign and circulate, local activist meetings and various activities at Labour Party conference.**

• For more see [stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com](http://stopthelabourpurge.wordpress.com) or email [stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com](mailto:stopthelabourpurge@gmail.com)



# Call for DWP-wide ballot

By a PCS member

On 7 July the Department for Work and Pensions announced a list of 74 Jobcentre and 28 back of house office closures.

The PCS DWP GEC has called an emergency meeting Friday 14 July. Activists in the Independent Left have submitted a motion calling for an immediate DWP wide ballot.

Earlier this year, the DWP issued proposals to close Jobcentres and offices and said some sites would be considered for co-location with local authority offices.

Although the PCS union Group Executive Committee issued a campaign plan and opposed the proposals, it was left to individual offices and branches to make submissions to the National Executive for industrial action. Only one was received, from DWP Sheffield Branch and union members at Eastern Avenue Jobcentre.

Members at Eastern Avenue were balloted, beat the new threshold imposed by the Tory government, and voted by 97% for strikes. So far the members at Eastern Avenue have struck for six days, with



PCS DWP and Revenue and Customs members at Wembley protesting against their office closing, with Dawn Butler MP

another five-day strike planned starting Monday 17 July. Picket lines have been well supported by PCS as well as Unite Community, DPAC, local Labour MPs and claimants. PCS members and the public are fighting this together.

No jobs are at risk in Sheffield. Staff will be moved into another Jobcentre. Members are striking to keep the Jobcentre in the local community it serves.

So far we are aware that up to 750 jobs are now at risk of redundancy, and thousands of the most vulner-

able in society will lose access to vital services in their community – leaving many sick and disabled claimants unable to attend mandatory interviews at their jobcentre, drastically weakening the service provided.

**The fight needs to be stepped up now. Having a handful of offices taking action on their own will not win this dispute. The members need to stand together and not let the cuts to our public services continue.**

# Outsourced workers fight low pay

By Simon Marks

Low paid workers at four London hospitals are leading the battle against austerity and the 1% pay cap.

They struck for three days on 4-6 July and are starting seven consecutive days of action as we go to press on 11 July. They plan to continue the escalation with a two week strike starting on 25 July.

These newly organised members of union Unite are showing the sort of determination sadly lacking in much of the union movement. The Unite Bart's Health branch campaign kicked off last summer. Since then over 700 domestic staff, porters and security workers have joined Unite, and 28 new reps have been elected. Regular all-member meetings have driven the campaign at each hospital, and a stoppage by 150 workers at the Royal London Hospital forced management to reinstate a 15 minute tea break.

These workers have been contracted to Serco. Many lost their NHS contracts in April. This is not only a battle against the pay ceiling,



but also against a private profiteer whose chief executive, Rupert Soames, took home over £2 million last year and boasted in the FT about a projected profit of £82 million in 2016.

Serco are out to crush the newly organised branch by bringing in scab labour from Scotland and Norwich and threatening staff on probation with the sack if they strike. However, the striking workers remain strong and united. Picket

lines in the first week of the strike were up to 140 strong and the planned demonstration will be a vital show of strength for the strike.

**If you want to support the fight against austerity you too should join the rally in support of the Serco strikers at the Royal London, St Barts, Whipps Cross and Mile End hospitals.**

• Assemble 12 noon, Saturday 15 July, Turner Street, Royal London Hospital E1 1BB.

# Teaching assistants reject deal

Teaching assistants in Durham have voted to reject the deal they were offered by the council which halted strikes several months ago.

The deal would have still left 472

of the teaching assistants losing money.

Members of both Unison and ATL have rejected the deal, despite unions urging them to accept it. There has been much anger from

teaching assistants who feel that Unison has been negotiating more on behalf of the council than for them.

**At the time of going to press teaching assistants had not yet announced their next steps.**

# Social workers strike

By Ken Worthington

Social workers in children's services at Kirklees council, West Yorkshire, are on strike over workloads, pay, agency staff, IT systems and bullying.

Around 200 workers have struck twice so far. On both days no workers crossed picket lines.

Workers are striking over high and unmanageable caseloads (caseloads have doubled since 2012), management bullying, and bosses refusing to implement an agreed regrading of pay. Kirklees social services were rated as inadequate by Ofsted eight months ago, and the report highlighted serious issues with workloads. One striking worker told a social work website that "the thing we fear most is bullying. Staff will speak out and some have been suspended for doing so. Staff are told if they don't get their work up to date they will be reported to the HCPC...yet while they try to catch up on this outstanding work they are allocated new cases"

In the aftermath of the Ofsted

report a commissioner was appointed by the government to recommend whether social services should be kept in-house or commissioned to the private or charitable sector. It was recently announced that the service will be staying in-house; however, Leeds City Council will provide a management lead.

Under the commissioners management staff have reported no improvement in conditions. Paul Holmes, Unison branch secretary, said "Members have had enough. Enough of bullying, enough of stress, enough of vacancies, enough of poor pay, enough of agency staff and enough of austerity... Our members have had enough of doing a difficult job in stressful circumstances for inadequate pay."

This is not an isolated case, Tory austerity is devastating local services and attacking workers' pay and conditions.

**In the aftermath of the general election, this action should be a spark for public sector workers to organise and fight back against Tory attacks.**

# Drivers support guards' strike

From the Off The Rails blog

RMT members on Southern, Northern, and MerseyRail have struck again, as the fight to stop "Driver Only Operation" (DOO) continues.

Southern workers struck on 10 July, Northern workers on 8-10 July, and MerseyRail struck on 8 and 10 July, with a further strike planned on 23 July.

Activists in the Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) campaign are working with RMT to organise picket line support. Demonstrations in support of the strikes, highlighting the vital role of the guard in ensuring safe and accessible trains, took place in several cities.

With the Tories' minority government looking ever shakier, and Labour increasingly confident after their election surge, now is the time to turn up the pressure. A sustained campaign of strikes, linking the imposition of DOO to private ownership and asserting the demand for renationalisation — shared by all rail unions and the Labour Party, and with huge support amongst the general public — could shake

the Tories yet further.

In some areas, Labour-controlled local authorities have some regulatory powers over local rail franchises. They have not always been as firm as we might like in supporting our campaigns to keep the guard on the train. Now's the time to take a stand. If Labour councillors and mayors won't back our strikes and use their powers to block or delay DOO wherever possible, local Labour Party members should, with our unions' support, move to deselect them and replace them with people who will.

Aslef also needs to take a stand. Their rank-and-file on Southern has, to its great credit, stood firm three times and turned over their leaders' attempt to settle their dispute in exchange for shoddy deals. Aslef has recently reinstated its overtime ban on Southern; they need to reinstate strikes too.

**On MerseyRail, and in some depots on Northern, Aslef members have respected RMT picket lines. This must continue, but the dispute would undoubtedly be bolstered if Aslef joined it formally.**

# Tube workers strike for permanent jobs

Fleet maintenance workers on London Underground's Piccadilly Line have returned a huge majority for strikes in their fight for permanent jobs, easily clearing the thresholds of the Trade Union Act.

144 workers were balloted, with 121 (84%) returning their ballot papers. 115 voted for strikes, and 119

for action short of strikes. Six workers voted against strikes, and two against action short, representing an 80% majority for strikes.

**The dispute aims to force LU and its engineering and maintenance subsidiary TubeLines to make all new jobs permanent, and abandon their current plans to recruit new staff on two-year fixed-terms contracts.**





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

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## Defend the Picturehouse four!

By Ollie Moore

**Cinema workers at five London branches of the Picturehouse chain struck again on Friday 7 July, as their battle for living wages, union recognition, and other benefits continues.**

Picturehouse bosses have raised the stakes of the dispute by sacking four Bectu union reps from the Ritzy cinema in Brixton, the site where the dispute began.

Three of those reps have had their appeals rejected, with a fourth waiting on an appeal outcome. All intend to pursue their cases at Employment Tribunal.

One of the sacked reps told *Solidarity*, "this act of blatant union busting tells you a lot about Picturehouse as an employer. They present an ethical, independent image, but they're motivated by the same greed for profit as their parent company Cineworld."

"The substance of the sackings is

outrageous: we've been sacked because an email, sent from a union address to members' personal accounts, mentioned an activity that community supporters of our campaign were planning to undertake. Picturehouse claim this makes us liable for the action itself, and that not reporting it to the company constitutes gross misconduct.

"It's a quite chilling illustration of the degree of power employers feel licensed to exert over their workers in the low-wage economy.

"The sackings won't deter us, however: the demand for our reinstatement will be incorporated into the wider campaign, and we have every intention of staying involved in the strikes as organisers and supporters".

Daily "community pickets" have been taking place at the Ritzy every weeknight from 5pm, distributing leaflets about the strike and encouraging customers to



Picturehouse workers and their supporters picketing on Friday 7 July.

take their business elsewhere. Community pickets were also mounted at the Hackney and East Dulwich Picturehouse on the 7 July strike day.

Workers' Liberty members and

supporters working at Picturehouse and active in the strikes are pushing for the union to name more strike dates as soon as possible, and to escalate the action beyond one day.

**Meetings are also planned with workers at other Picturehouse sites across the country, with the aim of spreading the strike.**

## Teachers' pay still frozen

By Gemma Short

**The government announced today (11 July) that teachers' pay will continue to be capped at 1%.**

This is the first public sector pay award to be decided since the general election, and the pressure on the government by their own MPs and others to end the public sector pay freeze.

**It does not look good for those to come.**

## Mike Ashley drinks and vomits while workers suffer

By Simon Nelson

**Billionaire Sports Direct and Newcastle United owner Mike Ashley has always been a controversial figure.**

Sports Direct is notorious for its use of zero hour contracts and employee search procedures that meant workers ended up earning below the minimum wage for the amount of hours they spent on site.

Ashley is back in the news with behaviour that now offends many of the business establishment. Jeff

Blue, a former Merrill Lynch banker, is suing Ashley over a supposed promise of £15 million if he could get Sports Direct shares up to £8 in three years. Blue did this and says he is owed the money.

The difference in this case is that Ashley calls the deal "drunken banter" agreed in the pub after, as testimony lays out, frequent drinking sessions. Ashley has described himself as a "power drinker" who challenges clients, senior managers, consultants to drinking competitions until the first person is sick. The press have

made a great deal out of his reported vomiting in a fireplace following 12 pints and 12 vodka shots in quick succession.

Ashley offends many in "his world" as he describes attending business events as boring, and says that Shirebrook, where Sports Direct HQ is, is so dull his only option is to go to the pub at the end of the day. Other exploits have involved him settling a £200,000 legal bill for Newcastle United with a bar game, "liars' poker".

The reality is Ashley is like most other people in "his world" but he

does not have the decorum or good manners, as others see it, to keep his excesses and blasé attitudes to himself. We don't care if Ashley drinks too much or has his business meetings down the pub, but it does say a lot about his attitude to Sports Direct and their staff. One member of staff gave birth in a Sports Direct toilet because they couldn't afford to take the time off.

**Ashley, on the other hand, is happy to drink till he's sick whilst taking the decisions that keep such terrible conditions.**

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